

Grace and the ELCA

For over 90 years, Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church has been a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and its predecessor church bodies. This is its theological home.

Faithful Christians of great diversity have found and continue to find meaningful spiritual nurture and fulfilling ministry at Grace. This will not change. All people are welcome.

Both within Grace and throughout the ELCA, faithful Christians do not agree on everything, yet we are bound together by our common confession of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Our Purpose, Core Values, Mission Statement, Goals, and Vision Statement, which Grace adopted as part of our “Plan for Grace”, are compatible with the ELCA.

From the time that the Church determined it was not necessary for Gentiles to become Jewish prior to becoming Christian, the Church throughout the centuries has made decisions about ministry and Scripture that were controversial at the time but which it decided were in the best interest of the Church and its mission of spreading the gospel. In his courageous stand against errant practices and theology of the Roman Catholic Church, Martin Luther was addressing the core issue of how we are saved – by God’s grace through faith in Christ. The issue today of sexuality is not an issue of salvation and therefore does not touch the foundation of our confessional unity.

+ After study, discussion, and prayer, we have determined that it will be more beneficial to the ministry of Grace Lutheran Church to continue in the ELCA than to withdraw.

+ As it has always done, in consultation with the bishop, the congregation of Grace will continue to decide who will be called as its pastor.

+ Grace will continue to teach and uphold marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, blessed by God.

+ Grace Lutheran Church will not host the blessing of same-sex unions.

+ Grace will provide a way for members who choose in good conscience to give financially to Grace and not to the general ministries of the ELCA.

Grace participated at every stage in the studies on human sexuality. The Council of Grace sent three resolutions to the NC Synod Assembly in 2009 stating our position and recommendation. The Council reaffirms those resolutions and confirms its judgment that Grace would be best served by continuing to rely on the prior social statements on sexuality of the ELCA’s predecessor churches — *Sex, Marriage, and Family - A Social Statement of the LCA* (1970); *Human Sexuality and Sexual Behavior - A Social Statement of The ALC* (1980); and *Teachings and Practice on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage - A Social Statement of The ALC* (1982) — as historical documents expressing faithful and beneficial Christian teachings on human sexuality. Likewise the Council finds that it is more beneficial to Grace and its members for its pastors and other rostered leaders to continue to adhere to prior ELCA standards of conduct as expressed in *Vision and Expectations* and *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*. We prayed for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We now must trust the direction of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Grace and the ELCA.

+ Adopted by Congregation Council, May 9, 2010